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CBSE 7201

Assignment #1

Define “Action Research” and discuss a current educational issue/possible research topic that is of interest to “you.” Refer to the following criteria when discussing each topic:

* Defining the Problem – discuss the need for intervention.
* Is it researchable?
* Prior Research? Name at least two sources.
* Pros and Cons: Name at least two sources.
* Current Instructional Strategies? Name at least two sources.
* Practitioners/Theorists? Name at least two sources.
* What is your proposed intervention? (Independent Variable). Name at least one source.
* How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention? (Dependent Variable)

**Action Research**

Action research is the process of discovering an immediate problem or a progressive problem and finding ways to address the problem. The first step in action research is defining a specific problem in which a person feels is worthy of addressing. Once the problem is addressed, the researcher must then think about how they can develop or design a solution through gathering data and research. The researcher will then implement the solution and observe over time to see how effective it is in alleviating the problem. The final step is to reflect upon the pre and post data to see if the results were positive or negative in creating a solution to the problem.

**Define The Problem**

Music and the arts are often at the top of the “cut list.” Whether it is due to budget cuts or because the programs are deemed not academically valuable, they are cut from elementary curriculums. The subjects and programs that do not make the list are those such as literacy, mathematics, science and social studies. In other words, the “most useful subjects” because those are the ones that make you “college and career ready.” The problem with music being cut from curriculums is that it will no longer be available to students and schools who benefit from the experience. Students who experience music and the arts in schools, encompass self-expression and better yet, these programs provide tools for various styles of learning. Learning music in the classroom can help students achieve academic success.

**Is It Researchable?**

This educational problem is researchable. Budgeting and cutbacks have a direct impact on our school system. The arts and music education have disappeared from various schools over the years, including my own. Therefore researchers are able to look at the academic performance in schools pre and post cuts and setbacks to determine the program’s aid in student learning.

**Prior Research?**

I found many different websites on research dealing with the importance of music education in elementary schools. I found one peer reviewed research article called *Arts Integration: What is Really Happening in the Elementary Classroom?* (<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1018332.pdf>) This paper contains information about how the arts are integrated into a primary school classroom and explores how the arts should be used for more than “decorative purposes.” There are many ways that teachers can use the arts for more than just a decorative purpose. For example, a teacher can use a song or a poem as a catchy way for the children to remember a color or a sight word. If the children are learning about animal habitats, you might want them to walk around the room like a hermit crab instead of just watching a video on the smartboard. Instruction should be more than just a page number.

I also found another article called *Students' assessments of music learning experiences from kindergarten to university* by Ruismäki, Heikki and Tereska, Tarja (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-music-education/article/students-assessments-of-music-learning-experiences-from-kindergarten-to-university/C69C9011B92A3D7A69529DF29621C83E>) This article reports on the importance of music education in all grades and how it helps the students grow and sends them in a positive direction in the future. This shows that music is vital in education because the experiences will last you a lifetime. It is something that follows you from Nursery School to College and beyond. I might not remember everything I learned in school, but I remember every single nursery rhyme.

**Pros and Cons**

There are various websites that include pros and cons when researching this particular problem. <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1110&context=ehd_theses> is a thesis paper that recorded the influence music had on test anxiety in the classroom. Test anxiety is a problem that many students experience. I am someone who can personally relate to those who do. Playing music in the background or teaching students to memorize content through songs might relieve some of the test anxiety and therefore increase their performance on an exam. This is a very debatable topic. There are many who believe that music might not have a positive effect on student learning in this manner. Some believe that background music during an exam is distracting, especially for those with sensory issues. Therefore it could also have a negative effect on a child’s test score depending on the needs of the child. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/lablouin/psych200/projects_sp01/music_reading.htm> talks about a researcher named Henderson who found that participants in his intervention had higher scores on exams when they listened to classical music rather than popular music. There are also researchers who believe that in addition to the type of music played, the complexity of the work is also a factor. Other than the type of music, the teacher’s motivation is also a problem that many face when conducting research for learning though music. Some teachers are not willing or unable to make room for music in their daily routines.

In the article stated above, *Students' assessments of music learning experiences from kindergarten to university* by Ruismäki, Heikki and Tereska, Tarja (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-music-education/article/students-assessments-of-music-learning-experiences-from-kindergarten-to-university/C69C9011B92A3D7A69529DF29621C83E>) they mention that there is a difference in scores based on gender. “The study suggests that gender differences do appear. Boys appeared to be underachievers in music education as earlier research has suggested.” (Wright, 2001) This could go hand in hand with the debate on classical and pop music. Last year I had boys in my class who preferred pop music and girls who preferred classical music during naptime. During an exam for this intervention, teachers would be more likely to choose a classical piece of music to play in the background, due to the fact that there are no words and might be less of a distraction.

**Current Instructional Strategies?**

According to <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/using-music-strategies-language-arts-classroom-heather-wolpert-gawron> there are various ways to integrate music into the classroom. One example featured in this article was using music in the aid of role-playing. The teacher developed a unit based on the United Nations and each day had music from different nations playing while the children acted as ambassadors to the U.N. This can be modified for all grades, for example in my Kindergarten classroom we learn about different families and where they come from. We could play music or national anthems from the country that each child’s family originates from.

Another site took a different take on using music in the classroom, by the means of a community builder. <http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/Arts%20in%20Education/brewer.htm> suggests that music provides a positive environment for students and “enhances interaction and helps develop a sense of community and cooperation. Music and arts education as a whole is a powerful tool to use in the classroom. “Selecting and playing a classroom theme song, developing a classroom "ritual," such as a good-bye or hello time that uses music.” This strategy allows the students to take pride in their class; therefore creating a safe environment that will have a positive effect on test scores.

**Practitioners/Theorists?**

There are various theorists who have taken a look at music education in classrooms and how it influences academic achievement. After reading through multiple research articles I came across a few names that stood out through all the research. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze was a Swiss musician and educator who developed a method of learning and experiencing music through movement. (<http://www.allianceamm.org/resources/dalcroze/>) Dalcroze was a practitioner who believed that children have natural and instinctive gestures that should be taken advantage of in the classroom. “He asked his students to walk and swing their arms, or to conduct while they sang or listened to him improvise at the piano.” It is now a requirement that the children get at least 30 minutes (weekly) of physical education in the classroom even if it is offered as a cluster position. This is a great way to incorporate music with physical movement. It is a way to “wake up the brain” and get ready to learn.   Another theorist that researched this problem was John Dewey. Dewey “thought that every person could be an artist” (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/eandc/vol22/iss1/art4/>.) John Dewey was a lot of things including a leader in educational reform. He was someone who thought of art as a means to an end because he envisioned the end as just as fair. Everyone should be given the chance to be an artist. Art allows for self-expression and self-confidence, something that we all strive to teach our children.

**What Is Your Proposed Intervention?**

My proposed intervention to the problem is to have teachers implement music education within their own classrooms during and in between instruction. By teaching the subjects such as literacy, mathematics, science and social studies with the use of music, students are taught through a new and expressive medium. The medium of art can act as a useful tool for many students. I plan on putting this into effect in my own classroom halfway through the year to see the effects pre and post problem and solution. The accuracy of the solution will be shown through that of academic success and test scores.

Our goal as educators is to inspire our students to learn and succeed through various types of learning in our classrooms and in the real world. It is our job to find what works for them and gives them the opportunity to utilize it in order to internalize the knowledge presented to them. Therefore we will be diversifying educational practices and at the same time ending the year with more versatile and self-confident students.